

## **THE 120TH REGIMENT HISTORY OF ONE OF THE FINEST OF THE MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS**

By Fred A. Olds

There had to be such infinite secrecy, yes mystery, during the cataclysm we call the World War that only now are some of the most interesting things beginning, to appear, popping out like the cuckoo in the front of the clock. For example, how many people want to know how our troops "got there," in other words reached France.

A little book, of only fifty-six pages, is the official history of the 120th infantry, U. S. A., the old Third North Carolina Regiment of the National Guard, which in the 30th Division immortalized itself between the two dates of its mobilization, August 5, 1917, and its demobilization, April 17, 1919; immortalized itself in the breaking of the Canal Sector in Belgium and then fought in the Ypres Lys Offensive and in the Somme Offensive.

This book was written by Major John O. Walker, assisted by Major William A. Graham and Capt. Thomas Fauntleroy, under authority from Col. Sidney W. Minor, commander of the 120th. Major Walker, designated as the official historian of the regiment, says in his preface that great care was exercised in its preparation and that nothing was claimed for the regiment which cannot be substantiated by the records of the 30th Division. The book is dedicated "To the Mothers and Wives of the Men of this Regiment, who died in France."

The regiment went into the United States service August 5, 1917, with Col. Minor in command, Claude McGhee, Lt. Colonel; battalion majors Don E. Scott, William A. Graham and Wade H. Phillips. The companies were commanded as follows: A, Lexington, Capt. James A. Leonard; B, Raleigh, Walter Clark Jr.; C, Henderson, James W. Jenkins; D, Louisburg, Samuel P. Boddie; E, Oxford, Elbert E. Fuller; F, Franklinton, James E. Whitfield; G, Reidsville, James H. Motley; H, Warrenton, Edward U. Price; I, Burlington, James C. Freeman; K, Asheboro, Ben F. Dixon; L, Thomasville, Carleton H. Newby; M, Durham, Walter E. Page; Headquarters Company, Thomas Fauntleroy; Machine Gun Company, Charles F. Lumsden; Supply Company, Stephen E. Winston; Sanitary Detachment, Abram R. Winston.

The men of the original regiment came from the central and piedmont sections and it was filled up later by men from Tennessee, Kentucky and Indiana. It was thoroughly American, inheriting the best traditions of a fighting stock who had proved their worth in the Revolution and in the War Between the States. The regiment, with the First and Second Regiments of the North Carolina National Guard, had served on the Mexican border in 1916-17, but when mobilized at Camp Sevier, Greenville, S. C., the old First Regiment was broken up, part of its men going to the 120th. The 60th Brigade, of which the 120th was a part, was commanded by Brig. General Sampson L. Faison, a North Carolinian of the regular army, declared by historian Walker to be "The Maker of the 30th Division;" a splendid compliment no doubt deserved.

To Camp Sevier there came a number of newly graduate officers, known as "Sears-Roebuck lieutenants" and these found a regiment which was trained to the utmost and quickly absorbed its traditions. Then came the arrival of French and British instructors in bayonet fighting, bombing, scouting, etc., training being largely centered around trench warfare, but fortunately open fighting was not overlooked and this very forethought on the part of the commanding officers proved of great value later and saved many lives in the fighting. The bayonet training developed fighting spirit and confidence as nothing else could have done.

Col. Minor and Lt. Col. McGhee were sent to a field officers' school and while they were away Col. Cochran of the regular army, a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, was in command and gained the admiration and confidence of all. The regiment was filled to its limit by men from Camp Taylor, Kentuckians and Indianians, a splendid lot both mentally and physically, and as fighters without superiors, who took their places in the regiment with a vim.